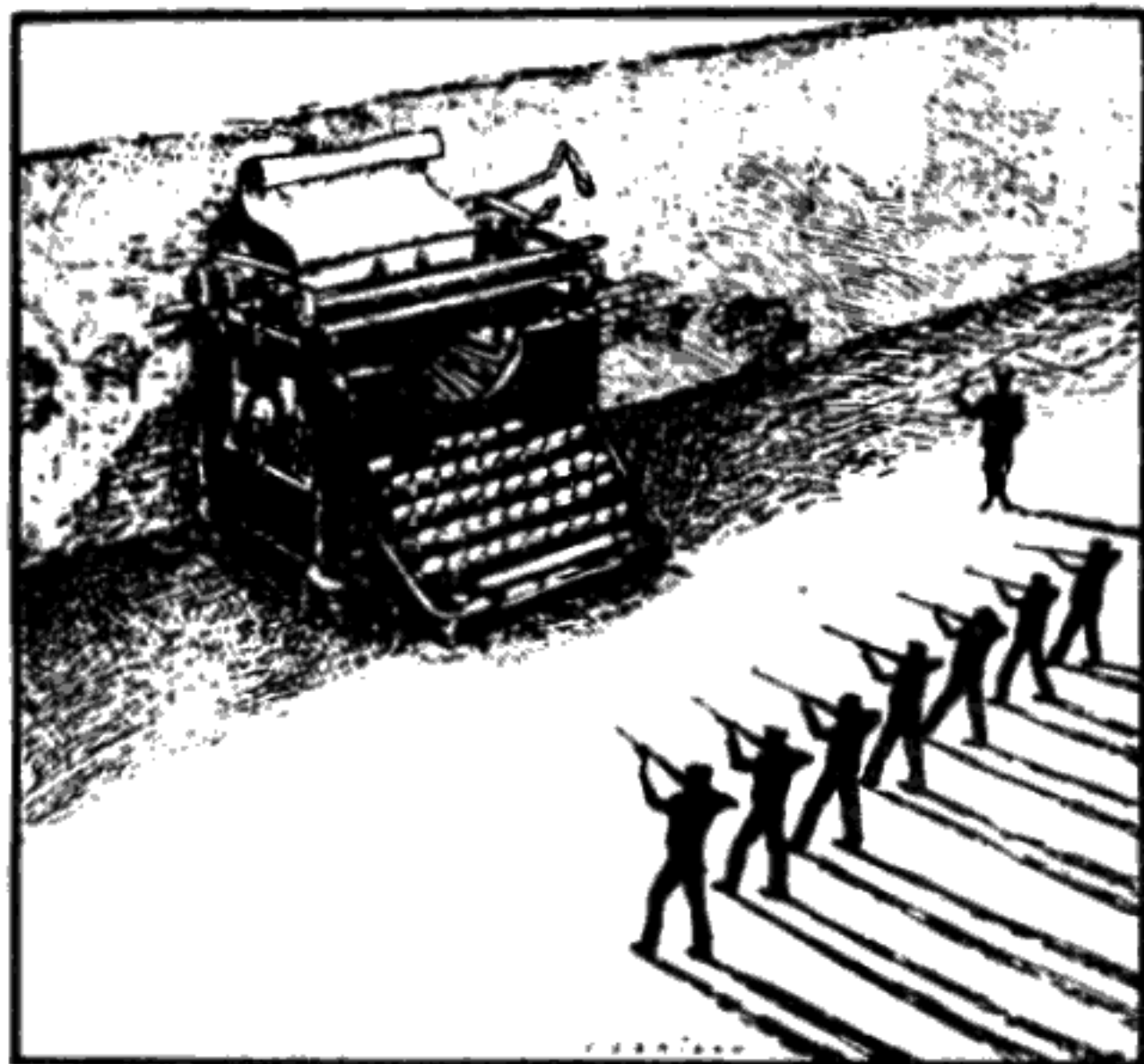


No 7



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LOBSTER



conversation with Peter Dale Scott
Gregory Korkala's address book
Kennedy assassination miscellany
parapolitical bits and pieces
clippings digest August-November

A conversation with Peter Dale Scott

This conversation with Peter Dale Scott was recorded in London at the end of August 1984. For the most part it is verbatim Scott: my contributions have been tidied up a good deal. As anyone who has met me knows, I am not as concise and articulate as the 'RR' presented here.

This text is about 60% or so of the entire transcript. Some bits were left out because Scott wanted them removed, some because we digressed away from whatever the main point was at the time, and some because it was just too long and something had to go.

Faced with the idea of interviewing someone like Scott I chose not to attempt a detailed poke through the man's writing. That would have been fun for me, interesting for a couple of dozen JFK buffs, but probably unintelligible to most people. Inevitably we got onto the JFK assassination, but not, I hope, before some other, equally interesting, material.

Peter Dale Scott has a number of 'hats'. He is Professor of English at the University of California, a literary critic, a poet, a translator of poetry. He is also a scholar of the post-war history of US involvement in S.E. Asia. (See, for example, his wonderful book *The War Conspiracy* (US 1972) and his essay in Volume 5 of the Gavel Edition of *The Pentagon Papers*) But he is probably best known for his writing on the Kennedy assassination. The 1978 Penguin book, *The Assassinations* contains two of his essays on that subject, and they are, in my opinion, the best writing on the assassination *that has been published*. I have to put it that way because Scott's 'magnum opus' on the assassination, *The Dallas Conspiracy*, has never found a publisher. (And, I should add, it is a measure of the extent to which I am not a serious student of the assassination that I do not have one of the photocopies of that work that are in existence, nor have I read it.)

I expected meeting Scott to be either a disappointment or an ordeal. It was neither. He is - and there is no way round this cliché - a really nice guy, unpretentious, and amazingly unaffected by the neglect his work has suffered at the hands of the timid intellectual establishment on both sides of the Atlantic.

RR: It says in the front of *The Assassinations* (1) that you were a diplomat.

PDS: Yes, well, if I hadn't been a diplomat I wouldn't have had the courage to say anything about Vietnam, which I did, near the beginning.(2) What I said at first wasn't terribly radical, just trying to get the facts straight and so on. As I did the research I was being educated - not just in terms of what I learned about Vietnam - but perhaps, even more significantly, about the failure of the American system to respond to the developments the way I had naively expected they would.

RR: You don't agree with the recent Gelb thesis that 'the system worked'.

PDS: In a way I suppose I came out thinking 'Yes, the system did work; that the whole thing was to consolidate American capitalist power, and that even in defeat that's what happened.' America is much better ensconced now in the rest of South East Asia than it was at the beginning of the war. But I wouldn't have believed that at

the beginning.

RR: That's interesting because I remember all the various versions of what the war was really about - oil in the South China Sea, or heroin. Your version is that it was just American capitalism.

PDS: My version, in everything I wrote - certainly in *The War Conspiracy* (3) - was that American finance wanted to have a shield for investment in South East Asia comparable to the shield which the NATO alliance had given them for investment in post-war Europe. And that was something explicitly said by American banking interests, which I quoted. One of the positions you didn't mention there, usually given by the establishment, is that they were thinking about global security and so on. Of course there is an element of that, but I think they had a really specific interest, not in Vietnam as a country, but in South East Asia as a region, very much in Japan. There was a feeling that Japan could only be viable if they somehow recreated the co-prosperity sphere which World War 2 was, in a sense, fought to destroy. I think that that kind of regional thinking had elements in it both of the global and, of course, the thinking that we (i.e. the U.S.) had lost one country - Laos - and we couldn't lose another - Vietnam. That was a factor, too, but I think that the regional thinking was central.

RR: And spokesmen for American capital actually said it as explicitly as that at the time?

PDS: What suited my purposes was a representative of the Chase Manhattan Bank.

RR: Well, that's fairly representative. This brings up the role of the 'national security' intellectuals who don't talk like that.

PDS: And who don't hear you if you talk like that. Well, I think they are sincere in what they are doing. This is a very big issue.

RR: What I was thinking was if you read *Foreign Affairs*, say, or the newer one, the slightly hipper one, *Foreign Policy*, people in there never talk directly about American interests.

PDS: It's always considered vulgar to make 'interest' into something concrete. There's a sort of sociology of language here. People are well-trained as to what they can and cannot talk about.

RR: Presumably they stick to certain vocabularies not because they're told to in any real sense, they just learn them, acquire them, because they, in turn, are taught by people at university who have inherited the same thing. So this goes back a long way - you have an institutional memory.

PDS: It doesn't go back all that long, because if you go back to the 1950s people did talk quite nakedly about it. That was the decade in which there was a great scare about finite raw materials in the world. Nelson Rockefeller played a big role in this. He had an article in *Foreign Affairs* about how ultimately nations would be as powerful as the percentage of world raw materials they could lay their hands on. When people talked about South East Asia in those days they talked about tin, oil, and rubber.

RR: You can get the quotations in the 1950s?

PDS: And the interesting thing is you look for those quotations in the sixties and you won't find them. There's been a kind of cleansing, partly I think because in the sixties people knew they were much closer to going into the areas than they were before and were therefore more conscious of how this kind of language could be used against them by the inhabitants of the region. I mean, you don't want to talk

about how you're doing this to make America strong: it's just not going to go over very well with the Indonesians and the Philipinos.

RR: You're describing a degree of acquired sophistication.

PDS: Yes, but I don't want to suggest that the intellectuals are somehow hypocrites. You set up little sub-sets of intellectual discourse and people become prominent by succeeding in those subsets. They learn both what they can and cannot talk about, and do not look critically at themselves while they're doing it. That's really why I left the Canadian Foreign Service. Some people learn to close their minds to certain issues.

RR: When did you leave?

PDS: I went in in '57 and came out in '61.

RR: So you came out when Kennedy was in? How did Kennedy strike the Foreign Service?

PDS: Well, I was in Poland when Kennedy was elected - I resigned from Poland - but I saw enough of the correspondence to say that people had been very frustrated with Eisenhower, and Kennedy, that promise of dynamism..

RR: They believed that sort of stuff?

PDS: Yes, they were anxious for it.

RR: I have great difficulty with the Kennedy thing, deciding whether he meant anything or not; whether he was just a rich son of a gangster, a slightly deviant elite-manager; or whether, as you have suggested, that there was a radical change coming, as in the withdrawal from Vietnam he seemed to be proposing.

PDS: There's a case for both sides but I will only respect those assessments of Kennedy which make a distinction between the man who was elected to office - and I have few good things to say about him; he was a regular Cold Warrior who came in with a 'missile gap' threat, who was going to do a lot of the things Reagan has done - and the Kennedy who had been to the brink in the Cuban Missile Crisis and had had to think about what it really meant to use nuclear weapons as a threat against a nuclear power. The only Kennedy I find interesting - indeed, this is true of both the brothers - is that year, after the Missile Crisis, when they had (a) backed down and (b)

RR: You see it as backing down?

PDS: Well, from an American point of view.. all the way through, that he didn't follow up on the Bay of Pigs - he took two years of shit from Congress, from the press, from everybody. Then in the Missile Crisis the idea was, originally, I think, that they would blockade Cuba to the point where the Cuban Government fell. In the end it was the Republicans who said 'Hey, there's been some kind of deal here, that the Russians will take out the missiles and the Americans will not overthrow Castro.'

What happened in '63 was mostly symbolic: the Test Ban Treaty - which probably did more harm than good in the development of the arms race but which was very important symbolically, the first treaty that had been signed in 8 years between the Americans and the Russians. The American University speech was rhetoric, but a very different kind of rhetoric from what he's been elected on. I think that some leftists underestimate the importance of symbolism in actually affecting historical directions.

Most U.S. presidents have not had to go through the re-thinking of the nuclear threat that Kennedy really did. I think it had brought him to the point of meaningful accommodations with the Soviet Union; and, of course, as you've already mentioned, I believe that Vietnam was an area where he was not just contemplating that but had actually taken the first steps in terms of the symbolic withdrawal of troops.

RR: Why do you think that fact, which has been quite widely documented

PDS: NSAM 273 has been declassified and it says what I said it did.
(4)

RR: Why hasn't this been taken on board by the conventional historians of the period?

PDS: Or the left-wing people like David Horowitz, who are not interested at all. They build up a portrait of the Cold Warrior from the first two years and they don't want to complicate the picture.

RR: That's interesting, the word 'complicate', because if work like yours does anything, what it does is complicate everything..

PDS: I think if I were cleverer I would come up with some simplification underneath it all - and I would still like to do that - but no, I'm only clever enough to see the complexity.

RR: There are lots of obvious connections between the kind of work you've done and what are called diplomatic historians. The diplomatic history of the Cold War is now getting so minutely organised that they'll soon be documenting peoples' behaviour and statements day by day in certain crucial periods. And in a sense that's what people like you have been trying to do for the sixties, to produce that kind of density for key periods. Your work is closer in intent and assumptions to diplomatic history than it is to any marxist or neo-marxist history. And I would regard your work as infinitely more radical than the marxist version precisely because theirs lack the attention to detail and doesn't try to explain what's going on in terms of the behaviour and thinking of real people.

PDS: Well, it's hard for me to see where I am because unlike many people in America I accept the economic interpretation of American imperialism. But it's true that whereas I can be very educated by marxist writing when if they're talking about debt structures and things like that they do tend to be not very helpful sometimes in foreign policy. Some people just don't get into fine tuning at all, and others, who do, are usually trying to test some theoretical model rather than just get to what the facts are. On the other hand I don't want to group myself with the diplomatic historians because they tend to leave an awful lot out. What I like to see is an awareness of economic activity that is not confined to abstractions but is actually looking at particular players, particular corporations in the Far East, particular banks in the Far East, how they link to government planning. You know that I write about the Council on Foreign Relations, and I've talked about the role of policy integrators there, where people come from the banks, the various agencies of government and so on, with their priorities and try to work out, informally at first, and then formally, the policies that will maximise the interests.

RR: You think it's that explicit? I'm sure they would deny this.

PDS: I don't think they would accept the language I use but I think it would turn out we're talking about the same thing. I think, for example, in late 1970 when people

had become concerned about the high profile of the CIA and its lack of adaptation to current needs, the idea that you would sack a large number of ageing officers and have a smaller Washington headquarters working with a larger number of agents through third nations - use the intelligence forces of other countries rather than the CIA - which was implemented by Nixon in '72 or so. But the whole idea, which involved the material interests of the people I've talked about, bankers and so on, was floated, tried out in the CFR before it was turned into an executive order by Nixon. The important thing is that it was all being discussed on the private level - whatever you call the CFR level; maybe it's wrong to call it private - at that level before the instruments of government were promulgated to implement it. And this is a little picture of what used to happen. I'm not sure that Reagan has that kind of relationship with the CFR. Certainly Carter did. It seemed at first that Reagan represented the western interests.

RR: The 'Cowboys'.

PDS: The old 'Cowboys'. Even then I think that 'Cowboys' - when push comes to shove - they're disguised 'Yankees', people like Cap Weinburger and Schultz from Bechtel. Bechtel is a San Francisco-based corporation, a privately held multi-national, but a multi-national like the others. It is not like Murchison and H.L. Hunt.

Let me say a word about Yankee/Cowboy. I always tried to argue with Oglesby (5) that it was really vulgarising an important argument to make it so geographical, that what was important here was global capitalism, multinational capitalism, versus national capital.

RR: Rather than where the base office was.

PDS: Right

RR: One of the great difficulties for me is working out the shift from economic interest to political activity. When I first began reading this material I just ignored it, assumed it was there - the way some lefties do - some invisible transmission system. When, in fact, it is extremely complicated and sophisticated and difficult to pin down.

PDS: The process is much more sophisticated than the individuals. Instead of looking for variations in foreign policy in the temperament of a Haig, predictable behaviour is generated out of bureaucratic organisations; and nobody has to be given specific semaphore signals about what economic interests are. Each bureaucracy has its own language of ideals which it is working for, but there are overall governing forces to make sure they don't get out of hand. The system is able to bring a maverick agency (like the FBI under Hoover) back into line. The classic example of this is the Presidency, Nixon and Watergate. Here is an interesting case where a President was perceived by other elements in the system as amassing more than his share of the power and he had to be brought to heel. He was totally humiliated by a group of institutions - like the Washington Post, the big TV networks - all of whom thought they were fighting for their lives. They didn't see themselves as the ruling class applying a little pressure to bring some little upstart to heel. The Washington Post thought it would lose its TV licences, which was big business for them. In other words, the system has a logic to it which no particular individual is in a position to command. Left-wing people have been trained to think in terms of capitalism, but I'm moving in a slightly Schumpeterian direction because I think that more and more we will see in the Soviet Union similar instances of the system exercising itself against this or that interest.

RR: But then the bureaucracies remain and the political appointments at their head change and, in this country at least, political scientists would say that this means that the bureaucracies will have their own policies which the politicians attempt to move. Given this, one way of looking at some of your work is to say that you seem to suggest that Kennedy was a threat because he seemed to be going against the established policies of a great many people or groups. When you ask the 'cui bono?' question after Kennedy's death the list is extraordinarily long.

PDS: So long as to make it perfectly safe to be on the list.

RR: So, if Kennedy was bucking these policies, these bureaucracies, these groups - which ones?

PDS: Well, I've just had to make certain decisions for myself. I've estimated that, by and large, Johnson's claim to represent continuity with Kennedy policies was largely true in the purely domestic area. It's when you get to the area of foreign policy that you see not only significant shifts - and, in some cases, real discontinuities - but even a conspiratorial approach to this. That is to say, discontinuities which were disguised from the American people. There were some people who had just always been against Kennedy. There was the whole story of the war against organised crime and how that could have kicked back. And I don't want to say that I don't think those things aren't relevant, but I think that if we're getting down to a real sort of shift that (a) allowed a crime like this to happen and (b) much more importantly, allowed it not to be pursued as an ordinary crime would be, I think there was a need for shifts at the foreign policy level which Kennedy wasn't going to give. The word 'threat' is a bit simple. I think there were just people who wanted certain things very badly and Kennedy - alright - threatened not to meet those needs, or even, as in the case of Vietnam, threatened to go in the opposite direction. I think it was felt very much that you needed to escalate the US presence in South East Asia, and there was a real threat - I think the word is legitimate here - that Kennedy would turn round and scale back instead of up the US presence. That was important. I think there was a need for a crisis decision on Indonesia, whether to go on supporting Sukarno or start shifting all the aid into support of the Indonesian Army. There was a shift there. In Latin America there was the question of whether the Alliance for Progress was supposed to move Latin America in the direction of more civilian governments and more civilian participation, or whether it was to tolerate, as traditionally America had, military overthrows. This was a question which had been accentuated by a military overthrow in the Dominican Republic in October '63 which Kennedy refused to recognise. There was a significant shift there.

RR: Given the role of Johnson as the incoming President, I was wondering what you thought of the recent news of Billy Sol Estes' remarks that LBJ ordered the murder of Henry Marshall.⁽⁶⁾ This, added to the picture painted in Robert Caro's recent biography of Johnson's early years, suggests that LBJ was certainly capable of Kennedy's murder. And the 'cui bono?' list has LBJ at the top, with a great many domestic scandals brewing in late '63 - TFX, Estes, Baker - all of which disappeared when Johnson became President. ⁽⁷⁾

PDS: He was in great trouble, and every time he was in trouble it was never something personal, always the whole power nexus he represented. TFX, Baker, these were scandals about the administration of power and the exercise of power and that involved hundreds of people, not just Johnson personally.

RR: The whole system.

- PDS: Yes, and the two scandals were coming to involve each other. And it's so interesting to note that the General Counsel for Henry Crown, who was the major stockholder in General Dynamics that had got the TFX contract, was named to the Warren Commission essentially as the person whose job it was to find out if there had been a conspiracy.
- RR: One of the striking things about David Lifton's book (8) was his account of the way the whole Warren Commission investigation was the work of lawyers, and his account of the way lawyers think. That was perhaps the biggest single insight of the entire book for me.
- PDS: I must say I've run across it too. You think something until there's a legal reason to think differently. It has nothing to do with ordinary common sense.
- RR: Lifton's central thesis is that the corpse was altered, and he seems to end up saying that the assassination conspiracy must have included altering the corpse in its plan, which to me is an absurdity.
- PDS: It's hard to know what are necessary parts of his theory and what are just flourishes. And I'm not sure he's entirely clear. I think it's possible to accept a good deal of his book on the assumption that it was a rushed corrective, that things hadn't gone quite right, for which they had some rough preliminary arrangement.
- RR: 'They' being who?
- PDS: Well, the Canadian who directed the CBC film I was in, he did another film on Lifton and said, for Canadian television, what few people have dared to say even among the assassination buff community, that it had to be the military who planned this; that it was done at such a high level - the use of military facilities - that we are talking about a plot inside the US military. And the only difficulty I have with this is: what do you do with all the Secret Service who are involved? What do you do with the CIA people who contributed so much to the Oswald legend? If Lifton is right - or half right - it brings the conspiracy back home to the highest levels of the US security bureaucracy.
- RR: That brings us to the question of whether we are dealing with a great big high-level conspiracy, or a small-time Texas bush-wacking conspiracy; whether it's Johnson cronies hiring a couple of Texas gun-men to try and solve Johnson's political problems.
- PDS: Well I think it's certainly more than some kind of Texas bush-league conspiracy. The real answer to that is the cover-up. The people pushing hard on the cover-up from the very beginning are Kennedy people, people Kennedy appointed. The Deputy Attorney General, Katzenbach, who rushes in the next day, who says we need a commission to establish that Oswald was the lone assassin, is a Kennedy appointee. So I think more than personal politics were involved.
- RR: Don't you think that those people would have responded like this whether they knew who had done it, no matter who had done it? To bury a conspiracy per se because that's not acceptable?
- PDS: Not, I think, with the efficiency that they did. To have moved so ruthlessly and at such legal risk - this meant, for example, upstaging the State of Texas which wanted to have its own enquiry. This suggests, of course, that if it really were the Johnson people, why not let the State of Texas do the enquiry and let them take the heat? I think it is really possible that one reason the Warren Commission came out with the hypothesis that Oswald acted alone was to deal with the rather carefully planted evidence - which was false - that Oswald was acting on behalf of Castro or Khrushchev or both of them. Johnson had a lot of power in

Washington, particularly in Congress. We mustn't minimise that. He had very powerful financial connections to the Rockefellers, people in Wall Street, Ed Weizel, who was a partner in Lehman Brothers and so on. He was very well connected but I don't think that as an individual and as Vice President he had enough clout to close the circle and come out with as unified a rebuttal to a conspiracy explanation as the system, in fact, produced. I think that the people who were threatened by all this had to be more than just Johnson because up to that time Congress was proceeding to investigate the Johnson related scandals, particularly the TFX. It is very dramatic to read the session of the TFX enquiry that closed on November 20th. The Chairman, McClelland, was saying that we will meet at the same time next week. You know when it next met? 1969, six years later. It came to a dead stop, and the Baker investigation too. What's true in all this - and I've been saying this now since 1970, and no-one listens - is that the key people who were getting named in the Baker investigation are the people who are in charge of Marina Oswald and getting her to change her testimony - particularly a man named Bedford Wynne, who just disappeared. You couldn't see him for 15 years, and now he's back. If you keep doing your parapolitical investigations into the banking scandals, he's back in the picture. So I don't want to exclude the hypothesis of Johnson's vulnerability and it's being taken care of by giving him the Presidency, but I don't think that's enough of an explanation - just as organised crime alone is not enough of an explanation. They did have a motive, and they were involved, but they could never pull this crime off by themselves.

RR: One question I can never resolve for myself from reading is whether I should take the Kennedy's 'war' on organised crime seriously. Was it a 'war' against organised crime or against certain sections of it who were contributing money to the Kennedy's' political opponents?

PDS: Well, I think you should take it seriously, but it was more like the second than the first. Obviously it was a 'war' against certain sections of organised crime: that's the only kind of 'war' you're ever going to get. But it's a little bit over-simplified to say they were giving money to the Kennedy's' opponents, because a lot of the people they were going after were giving money to the Democrats which meant that some of them had given money to the Kennedy campaign. Some of them genuinely felt that they had been double-crossed by the Kennedys. They thought they had got a deal with the old man and thought the old man could call the shots for the sons, and that didn't work out in the case of Bobby.

RR: It was something I read - was it in Nevasky's book about the Kennedys? (9) - he quotes somebody who was a spectator in the Kennedy 'war' and he described how the Kennedy people would come into town - a gang of attorneys would appear - go round, make a few enquiries, and magically all the local Democrats would switch to the Kennedys.

PDS: Well, you certainly can't exclude that. I think I said myself that we can see the Kennedy 'war' as an attempt by them to gain total control over their own party. Just as you can see Nixon's moves after Watergate as an attempt to get total control over his. On the other hand I don't think we should vulgarise their motives too much. The Kennedy version of that 'war' was: we are in an impossible position if we are going to make war on organised crime and all the Federal judges in the State of Michigan are pro-Hoffa because they were put there by the Democratic National Committee member for Michigan who happens to be Hoffa's personal attorney. That's their excuse for having brought a rather cheap case against Hoffa way down in Tennessee. It was a kind of dirty war on

both sides, but from their point of view it was either a dirty war or no war. You couldn't separate the war on Hoffa from a war to change the political influence in the Democratic Party that affected the appointment of Federal judges.

RR: Some people, notably I suppose, Jack Newfield (10), have presented a version of Bobby Kennedy as seriously radicalised in '67/'68. Was that true?

PDS: I've heard it from other people whom I respect - Frank Mankiewicz and Daniel Ellsberg. They feel that Bobby's politics had changed. Remember he switched on the Vietnam War. In the '68 campaign the McCarthy people were furious with Kennedy for getting in the campaign. But the Kennedy people were furious with McCarthy for getting in because Bobby had made his break with the Vietnam War before McCarthy, back in '67.

RR: That's not in most of the books. The version you usually get is Bobby saw a political advantage to be gained after McCarthy broke the ground for him, and made a classic cynical Kennedy move.

PDS: I felt that myself in '68. But since then, when I realised how many CIA people were in the McCarthy campaign - without derogating from McCarthy's personal sincerity - I always wondered if it wasn't the other way round, that the McCarthy campaign was pushed on him in order to steal Bobby's thunder.

RR: I've never seen anything on McCarthy and the CIA.

PDS: Top level people like Tom McCoy, one of the CIA's top operatives in Laos. He believed the war in Vietnam was a bad thing because it stopped the CIA from doing the right sort of thing in Laos. And he was one of the top people in the McCarthy campaign. Let's put it this way: it would be wrong to think that all the cynical politics were in the Kennedy camp and the McCarthy campaign was nothing but pure unadulterated idealism. The Kennedys did bear a big responsibility for the Vietnam War, but having seen it go so sour, Bobby coming out against it - you talk about threats: that was probably more threatening in '67/'68 than anything the Kennedys had already done, except maybe in the last days of '63.

RR: Bobby was an election winner.

PDS: Put it this way: Johnson was an election loser. And the way the American system works they don't mind if somebody's going to lose because they usually control the other guy too. But the Kennedys were never exactly controllable because they had so much money of their own. And Bobby was really going off the scale when he opposed the war.

RR: Another good reason for having them killed: their financial independence made them a loose cannon rattling around.

PDS: And I think Nixon became threatening when he tried, through CREEP, to give himself the same kind of financial independence.

RR: If 'X' wanted to control John Kennedy, why not just blackmail him? Why actually shoot him? Why not poison him? Why so public? Why so vulgar?

PDS: Yes, particularly if you're saying it was a high-level operation. Why not just give him something which made him have a heart attack? That's a very good question. I've thought about this before and I used to talk about a two or three-tiered conspiracy in which what might happen would be A learns that B is going to kill the President; and whereas A normally might be able to stop it, A's culpability is allowing B to go ahead and do it. That's why I don't totally rule out the organised crime thing at all. I just simply said from the very beginning that the cover-up

proves that it was sanctioned at a level higher than organised crime. No way that Blakey can explain the cover-up. He has to pretend that a cover-up didn't occur. And this is particularly sensitive for him because Blakey himself was in the Justice Department close to the area that was the responsibility of Howard Willens. And Howard Willens was seconded to the Warren Commission to become a kind of key man, assigning A to do this and B to do that and nobody at all to find out who killed the President.

RR: Steve Dorril was interested in your views on the American Security Council in all this.

PDS: In the book that didn't get published I said a lot about them. There's like a two-party system in the American power structure and I think the ASC are the opposition to the CFR. The CFR, ultimately has an interest in peace which the ASC don't have. When I said there was a lot of screaming and hollering going on in '62/'63 about Kennedy policies, probably the most vigorous spokesmen were from the ASC. And who are the ASC? It's people like General Dynamics who were being threatened by those Congressional investigations at the end of '63. The ASC overlaps with some other committees - the Citizens Committee for a Free Cuba, for example. And when you start looking at the details of the anti-Castro Cuban politics of that period then this group, Claire Booth Luce and so on

RR: The old China Lobby hands.

PDS: Very heavy over-lap - I won't say interlock because it's an earlier period - with the China Lobby of the 1950s. My analysis of that period is to say that Kennedy had a Cuban lobby problem in the same way that Eisenhower had a China Lobby problem.

RR: A personal question: how did you feel when NSAM 273 was published and it confirmed your analysis of it?

PDS: I guess I felt relieved first of all that I hadn't made a mistake. There has been a lot of debate in America as to whether Kennedy had changed on Vietnam and nobody seems to bother to look at the documents. I find that very frustrating.

RR: Has anybody in your part of the world dug up the FBI documents on their Cointelpro operations against the Fair Play For Cuba Committee which were going on in '62/'63?

PDS: We've tried to. They release what they want to. In our library we have all the Cointelpro documents on microfilm. So many of them are really interesting, but when you get to the FPCC they are really penurious, there's nothing there. I think substantial numbers of them are being withheld - for the obvious reasons. Incidentally, thinking of this and Oswald's role, I have come across another Marine who served in the Far East, came back to America, proclaimed himself to be a left-winger, and started not only reading but actually selling the Daily Worker. He was not working for the FBI but for one of those private industrial security firms, which the defence industries are required by law to have. This Marine was parading himself up and down as a reader of the Daily Worker - exactly what Oswald was doing - and this man's reports went back to his employer and they, in turn, sent them all on to the FBI. The FBI liked this man's work so much that eventually they recruited him. As soon as he got membership in the CPUSA he became an official informant in the FBI. So I think it is very logical to see Oswald's behaviour as being like this other Marine.

RR: What about the persistent little rumours that Ruby was a homosexual?

PDS: Both Ruby and Oswald. That was part of the initial conspiracy, one of the

conspiracy angles. And that's where I disagree with so many about the David Ferrie material, even though the House Committee took it seriously. I suspect all that Ferrie thing because the point of it was to show (a) that Ferrie had a homosexual connection to the members of his little troop (11), and (b) that he had chased down to Texas, had gone to the same city that Ruby had gone to from Dallas. I think that was all planted at the time, a sleeper story that was eventually served on the world by Jim Garrison. The number of people in Dallas who were coming forward to the police saying that Oswald was staying at the YMCA - which he had been - which was frequented by homosexuals, including Jack Ruby.

RR: I wanted to ask you about the Operation Mongoose episode. On the one hand the right-wing are accusing the Kennedys of doing a deal with Castro, while at the same time the Kennedys set Mongoose going underneath everything. It looks like a contradiction. Is it?

PDS: This is particularly complicated because the Church Committee chronology suggests that there were new operations authorised against Castro in June '63, which, of course, seems to work against my thesis that they were learning to live with Castro. Let me say a broad and a more subtle thing about that. The broad thing is that the Kennedys usually did things in pairs - the carrot and the stick - and pressure on Castro to remind him of where his interests were, that is possible. But in a more narrow way I suspect I know what those June '63 initiatives were. I think that the Kennedys really had started a new type of Cuban exile movement against Castro, the chief element of which was that there would be money to go anywhere else they liked, in the Caribbean, to find their bases. They would get money for training and they would get a green light, but it meant the Cubans got out of the US. Because this was becoming very embarrassing: remember Alpha 66 attacking the Soviets ships and so on, from the US. So the Kennedy strategy was to authorise a new type of organisation, under new leadership which would get them all out of the US. And I think this operation was penetrated from the very beginning. This may be the key to the assassination, in fact.

RR: Penetrated by whom?

PDS: First of all by the CIA because they wanted to know what was going on, for a minimum. But this was another slap at them: the Kennedys doing what they were supposed to do. And they, that is the CIA, were being accused by Bobby Kennedy of having dealt with organised crime people. And I think the first thing the CIA did was to get Cubans into the operation who quickly turned round and started dealing with organised crime figures. This was the so-called Junta. I think in its inspiration it was really - I don't want to say legitimate - but its motives were mostly to get the Cubans away from the US. And they got involved with Frank Sturgis, Gerry Hemming, Loran Hall - all of the weird names who turn up in the Kennedy assassination literature, many of them because they were spreading false stories about Oswald immediately after the assassination. The CIA files on this operation, the Junta, make it look more and more like an organised crime operation from beginning to end. The House Committee, rather foolishly, without interviewing anybody, put the contents of this file into Vol 10 of its report as if it were all fact. Now, what a perfectly invulnerable vantage point to have shot Kennedy from, if you used the assets of that operation to kill him. That would explain Bobby's sense of paralysis, because it was his operation.

RR: Who was running this Junta? Which bureaucracy was handling the money?

PDS: It was a Cuban lawyer in Chicago. Initially in '62 Bobby Kennedy had worried

about all the Cuban professionals who were washing dishes and stuff like that. Via the White House, Bobby got the Cuban lawyers of America organised into a Cuban Lawyers Association. It was a Cuban attorney who did this. I've talked to this man - at great length - and he says his employer called him into his office (the vice president of the corporation confirms this) and someone promised him a lot of money if he could organise under the following terms: unify the Cubans and get them out of America. Then he went down to Miami and tried to organise them all into a Junta. It may very well be that what really silenced the Kennedys was that the murder was committed through this, their own creation, for which there was very little authority, even less than the CIA had. The Junta material is what I was going to put in my book that didn't get published.

Vol. 10 of the House Committee report, based entirely on CIA files, gives this totally distorted picture of what was going on. And it is interesting that the CIA files were getting full of material about the organised crime activities of this Junta just before the assassination. I think there is even a wrap-up report that's dated November 21. The Junta itself was wound up and all of its arms were given to Alpha 66, which was the biggest group in it, a few days before the assassination.

Apropos of Oswald being a penetration agent and an informant, there was this odd Sheriff who made a report that he obviously wasn't meant to that Oswald had been hanging around this 3128 Harlendale address in Dallas. Well that (3126 Hollandale) was the Dallas address of Alpha 66. In other words Oswald was penetrating the groups that were engaged in activities for the Junta. I can't tell you whether he was doing it for the CIA, who hated the Junta, or, alternatively, for the less militant in the government who favoured the idea of the Junta but didn't like the fact that they were breaking the ground rules. Because one of the chief ground rules was no military operations based in the US, and in the previous 3 or 4 months that's almost exclusively what the Junta group were doing, groups like Alpha 66 and the 30th November, who were totally unsympathetic to the Kennedy idea of putting an arms length between the US and anti-Cuban activity.

RR: Thinking of the term para-politics which is used to describe the kind of work you are doing, and which The Lobster is interested in, is it possible that the term is becoming redundant as the whole political world is slowly revealed as para-political?

PDS: No. I don't think so, because it is a method of analysis. There is room for all kinds of other political analyses - the Marxist, whatever - which are looking at more public and broadly-based movements. But the phenomenon of the covert manipulation, of the covert involvement, that is a legitimate specialisation. It isn't the whole truth, just part of the truth, but a part which hasn't been looked at very much. What I regard as the best of the assassination research community is not going to limit itself to, understands that you can't just be interested in, the Kennedy assassination in isolation. You will never understand it that way. So it becomes a commitment to move into research of these recurring phenomena.

RR: When people say 'Why take an interest in the Kennedy assassination?', I say it is the door-way into everything else: you go in there and work backwards and forwards.

PDS: Particularly because by a weird political fluke it produced a flood of documentation. If a sociologist wanted to see how the FBI investigated a case, the best one to look at is the Kennedy assassination. There is no other case which begins to have that kind of documentation.

RR: Do you actually expect there will be a solution to the case?

PDS: You shouldn't expect to find who was the gunman on the Grassy Knoll. But on the other hand that would be such a trivial piece of information, not what we really want to know at this stage. The things we do want to know are larger questions, and I think that someday they may be discovered. The small, immediate, Dealey Plaza questions may never be answered, but may also cease to interest the real student of the Kennedy assassination.

RR: Who, one would hope, eventually become coterminous with a student of American politics. You can't understand contemporary American political history without studying the assassination. And the academic text-books which attempt to do so are just an absurdity.

PDS: Or the left-wing model which has no room for these kind of anomalies.

Notes

1. *The Assassinations*, edited by Scott, Hoch and Stetler (Penguin London 1978)
2. See, for example, *The Politics of Escalation in Vietnam*, F. Schurmann, P.D.Scott and R. Zelnik (US 1966)
3. *The War Conspiracy*, (US 1972)
4. Scott's construction from published bits and pieces of NSAM 273 is in *The Assassinations*. The full declassified text is included in *Vietnam: Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions* Vol 2 edited by Gareth Porter (US 1981)
5. Refers to Carl Oglesby, ex SDS who moved towards a conspiratorial viewpoint. See his *The Yankee Cowboy War* (US 1976).
6. This broke in the States in early 1984. To date there has been no elaboration of the initial press reports.
7. The best contemporary account of this I know of is Joachim Joesten's *The Dark Side of LBJ* (London 1968 or 1969)
8. *Best Evidence* (UK 1982)
9. *Kennedy Justice* by Victor Nevasky (US)
10. *Robert Kennedy* (New York 1969)
11. Oswald was briefly in a unit of the Civil Air Patrol which was commanded by Ferrie.